



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA REOPENS COMMENT PERIOD ON INTERIM RULE FOR INTERSTATE MOVEMENT OF CITRUS NURSERY STOCK FROM FLORIDA

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29, 2008--Based on new findings, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is reopening the comment period for the March 22, 2007, interim rule that prohibits, with limited exceptions, the interstate movement of regulated nursery stock from the state of Florida due to citrus canker.

The interim rule allows for the interstate movement of calamondin and kumquat plants in accordance with a protocol designed to ensure that these plants are free of citrus canker. However, following the publication of the rule, APHIS officials identified citrus canker on calamondin plants during nursery inspections. Based on these findings, it appears necessary to remove calamondin plants from the protocol when the rule is finalized. For these reasons, APHIS is reopening the comment period to provide interested people the opportunity to submit comments regarding calamondin plants and the interstate movement protocol. APHIS inspectors did not identify any infected kumquat plants. However, due to a state-wide citrus greening quarantine issued on Jan. 8, no citrus nursery stock, including kumquats and calamondin, may move interstate from Florida.

This interim rule clarifies existing provisions in APHIS' Aug. 1, 2006, interim rule that quarantined the entire state of Florida for citrus canker and amended the regulations for fruit movement from quarantined areas. The language in the August 2006 interim rule could have been interpreted as allowing the interstate movement of citrus nursery stock if certain inspection and decontamination procedures were met. This interim rule is intended to remove any ambiguity in the citrus canker regulations and protect against the spread of the disease to other citrus-producing states. The movement of citrus fruit from quarantined areas in Florida was addressed in a separate rule published on Nov. 19, 2007.

Citrus canker is a disease that causes lesions on the leaves, stems and fruit of citrus trees. While not harmful to humans, the disease affects the health and marketability of infected fruit. It is spread by wind and rain. Despite a 10-year effort to eradicate the disease from Florida, an unprecedented series of storms in 2004 and 2005 spread the disease to the point where short-term eradication is no longer possible.

Notice of this extension was published in the Jan. 29 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Feb. 28. Send an original and two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2007-0032, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road,

Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at

<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2007-0032>. Click on "Add Comments" to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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